S:Davis & Deacon E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
NU21 Seri NU21

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[161]

Sea turtle was still the staple meat, and with better boats and improved tools and tackle borrowed from the Mexicans, the living was becoming considerably less harsh along the shores. They then had nine boats for some two hundred people. One good boat could secure a living for five families, and they had well improved this minimum standard of living.

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The origin of the use of fire among the Seri's is unknown, but they have their own story of it. One day Chico Romero, present chief of the Seris (Fig. 19), made a fire drill out of a piece of dry driftwood and showed how to make a fire by turning the stick between the hands. In three or four minutes the fine dust became a glowing punk which, with the aid of some dry grass and the wind, was quickly fanned into a flame. He was then induced to tell the legend. He looked about and pointed to a little green and blue-bodied fly and said: "The gods sent this fly down from the sky to show us how to make fire. Notice when it lands. Did you not see

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FIG. 18. THE NATIVE DANCE
IS DONE ON TOP OF A TURTLE SHELL TO THE BEAT OF A BOW STRING BEING STRUCK WHILE THE BOW IS HELD AGAINST TWO INVERTED BASKETS OR DRUM.

[p. 265 (B)]

[89 cont.]

000 abundant flying and, especially, marine fauna.

For a modern technology, their region has great resources,
● 511 but for the culture of the Seri it is frankly inhospitable. The standard of living is exceedingly low, as is proclaimed by natives and foreigners and as is demonstrated by the illnesses and hunger that weaken the population.

[90] The Seri truly form part of our Western society, in
226 439 so far as they catch fish, with fishhooks and motorboats, to sell
[177] in the markets of Hermosillo, Nogales, and Tucson, and they obtain payments in national specie and coin. The part that
182 they form, however, has its own internal structure, which regulates the relations with the environment and among its mem-
[161] bers, even though a group of 218 persons, which suffers severe alterations in percentages from disasters like the sinking of a boat or strokes of good luck like the establishment of a prosperous fishing camp, is almost insignificant for the nation.

Most probably they have never been much more numerous, and they must not have had great cohesion in the past, a situation explicable in view of their nomadic gathering economy.
621 Toward the close of the 18th century they were divided into bands, of which it is known that the most important were the Guaymas, Upanguaymas, Tepocas, Tiburones, and Salineros.
[648] They banded together at various times in order to defend themselves and to attack the nuclei of Mexicans of the zone, achieving combined action, but without effective political unity.

619 At present they seem to form a single group without marked subdivisions, although they recognize affiliations like that of "Tiburones," "half-Papago," etc., which appear to have little real classificatory significance.

184 There is great uniformity: they speak a single language
619 incomprehensible to the rest of humanity; they have a relatively uniform culture, and there is tribal unification for matters involving sexual exchange.

The most obvious relations are spatial; they have important
361 settlements that sprung up around the fishing establishments and are more or less permanently occupied. Of these, "El Desemboque," close to the mouth of a river from which they have been displaced, is the most important, with 80 per cent of the Seri

[90 cont.]

361 population. There is an obvious separation there between the
563 Seri and the yori, or non-Seri, with manifest differences in cultural patterns.

The yori occupy an extensive area per person; their homes are quite distant from one another, and four families in conjunction occupy a belt of land of about 100 by 50 meters.

361 The Seri are grouped by families, inhabiting minute squares of from one and a half to two meters to a side. The yori
182 feeling of prestige, based on the territorial expanse of their prop-
361 erty, contrasts with the feeling of security based on personal
● 511 contact that dominates many aspects of Seri life; the small size of the Seri habitation indicates, not a low standard of living, but a distinct [91] concept of comfort, according to which the Seri, having all the desert to live in, like the yori, confine themselves to the limits that personal contact permits.

In January, 1952, there were 33 dwellings, with an aver-
592 age of 4.6 persons in each, those lodging four, five, and six persons frankly predominating. Each three or four more closely related families occupied contiguous homes, forming relatively separate conjunctions by themselves, which we might call
596 macrofamilies.

The family is the basic Seri institution, which is manifest in all aspects of life: it is the center of production, co-operation, the division of labor, education, diversion, government, etc.

582 Going beyond the family and macrofamily organization,
619 we have a tribal structure based on the generalized exchange (2)
621

2. Lévy Strauss, Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté [Elementary Kinship Structures], Paris, 1949.

of members for concluding marriage, by which all the Seri are actually linked by consanguinity or affinity. One is almost able to include all the members of the tribe on a single genealogical chart, systematically excluding only some few outsiders who have penetrated the group.

582 This situation, which would make one think of a primitive